

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Original) A device for sampling or collecting comprising
 - i) a swab which is a natural or synthetic absorbent material comprising gelatine particles or collagen particles; and
 - ii) a support fixed to said swab.
- 2-84. (Cancelled)
85. (Currently amended) The device according to claim 84 1, wherein the swab is selected from the group consisting of a gelatine-based sponge, collagen-based sponge, microfibrillar gelatine and microfibrillar collagen.
- 86-87. (Cancelled)
88. (Previously presented) The device according to claim 85, wherein the gelatine-based sponge has a water absorption capacity of at least 30 g/g as determined by USP method “Absorbable Gelatine Sponge: Water Absorption”.
- 89-90. (Cancelled)
91. (Currently amended) A kit comprising
 - i) a device according to claim 84 for sampling or collecting comprising a swab comprising gelatine or collagen; and
 - ii) an agent selected from the group consisting of a neutral diluent, an anti-microbial agent, a disinfecting agent, and a dispersion agent.

92. (Previously presented) The kit according to claim 91, wherein said neutral diluent is selected from the group consisting of saline, saline peptone, buffered saline peptone, Ringer solution and an organic or inorganic buffer.

93. (Currently amended) A method for collecting a target from a collection medium comprising

- i) providing a swab comprising gelatine or collagen; and
- ii) making contact between the swab ~~of the device of claim 84~~ and the target; and
- iii) transferring the target from the swab to a first transfer medium by releasing said target from said swab into the first transfer medium.

94. (Previously presented) A method for collecting a target from a collection medium comprising making contact between the swab of the kit of claim 91 and the target.

95. (Currently amended) A method for sampling an area for a target comprising:

- i) swiping the surface of the area with a pre-wetted swab comprising a gelatine-based or a collagen-based sponge; and
- ii) swiping the area pre-wetted in step (i) with ~~the device according to claim 1~~ a swab comprising gelatine or collagen, thereby recovering the target from said pre-wetted area.

96. (Previously presented) The method according to any one of claims 93 to 95 further comprising the transfer of the target from the swab to a first transfer medium.

97. (Currently amended) A method of lowering the amount of a target in a sample area comprising

- (i) making contact between ~~the~~ a swab of the device of claim 84 comprising gelatine or collagen, and at least a portion of said sample area, so that the target adheres to the swab, and
- (ii) said method further comprising transfer of transferring the target from the swab to a first transfer medium.

98. (Previously presented) The method according to any one of claims 93 to 95, wherein the collection or sampling is from a collection medium selected from the group consisting of a solid or semi-solid surface, a liquid, a gas and combinations thereof.

99. (Previously presented) The method according to any one of claims 93 to 95 or 97, wherein the target is selected from the group consisting of a virus, a microorganism, a mammalian cell and an organic molecule.

100. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 99, wherein the organic molecule is selected from the group consisting of a nucleotide, a nucleic acid, a protein and a detergent.

101. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 96, wherein the transfer comprises the digestion of the gelatine or collagen.

102. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 96, wherein the transfer comprises the washing of target from the gelatine or collagen.

103. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 101, wherein the digestion comprises the use of an agent selected from the group consisting of an enzyme, a mineral acid, a carboxylic acid, a base and combinations thereof.

104. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 101, further comprising the extraction of the target by membrane filtration.

105. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 96, further comprising the use of an agent selected from the group consisting of a neutral diluent, an antimicrobial agent, a disinfecting agent and a dispersion agent.

106. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 96, wherein said method further comprises the step of culturing the cells collected on the swab in a growth medium.

107-117. (Cancelled)

118. (Previously presented) The method of claim 99, wherein the micro-organism is selected from the group consisting of bacteria, bacterial spores, archea, yeast and fungi.

119. (Previously presented) The method of claim 99, wherein the mammalian cell is a cell from blood plasma.

120. (Previously presented) The method of claim 119, wherein the mammalian cell is selected from the group consisting of leukocytes, erythrocytes and thrombocytes.

121-129. (Cancelled)

130. (Withdrawn, currently amended) A method for cultivation of a micro-organism or a mammalian cell, said method comprising the steps of:

- i) contacting ~~the device according to claim 1~~ a swab comprising gelatine or collagen with a target contained in a sample, wherein said target binds to ~~the particles of the swab of the device~~,
- ii) injecting a liquid growth medium into the swab ~~of the device~~,
- iii) allowing in situ growth of the bound micro-organism or mammalian cell in the swab,
- iv) transferring the swab to a container with a liquid growth medium, and
- v) allowing for cultivation of the micro-organisms or mammalian cells in said liquid growth medium.

131. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 130 comprising the further step of characterizing the cultivated micro-organisms or mammalian cells.

132. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 130, wherein the characterizing involves a qualitative determination of the micro-organism or mammalian cell.

133. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 130, wherein the sample is obtained from a surface in a food production line.

134. (Withdrawn, currently amended) The method of claim[[s]] 130, wherein the sample is obtained from a surface in a health clinic or a hospital.

135. (Withdrawn, currently amended) The method of claim[[s]] 130, wherein the sample is obtained from an open wound in an individual.

136. (Withdrawn, currently amended) The method of claim[[s]] 135, wherein the open wound is a surgical wound.

137. (New) The kit according to claim 91, wherein said device comprising a swab comprising gelatine or collagen is attached to a support.

138. (New) The method according to any of claims 93, 95, 97 and 130, wherein said swab comprising gelatine or collagen is attached to a support.

139. (New) The methods according to claims 137 and 138, wherein said support is made from materials selected from the group consisting of wood, natural or synthetic polymeric material including plastics and rubber materials, and any other organic or inorganic material.

140. (New) The methods according to claims 137 and 138, wherein said support is of the form selected from the group consisting of a handle, a stick, a tweezer, a tong, a disc, a cube, a sphere, a block, a crucible and a coating.

141. (New) A method for sampling an area for a target comprising: i) swiping the surface of the area with a pre-wetted swab of the kit of claim 91; and ii) swiping the area pre-wetted in step i) with the swab of the kit of claim 91, thereby recovering the target from said pre-wetted area.

142. (New) A method of lowering the amount of a target in a sample area comprising i) making contact between with the swab of the kit of claim 91, and at least a portion of said sample area ii) so that the target adheres to the swab, iii) said method further comprising transfer of the target from the swab to a first transfer medium.

143. (New) A method for cultivation of a micro-organism or a mammalian cell, said method comprising the steps of:

- i) contacting the swab of the kit of claim 91 with a target contained in a sample, wherein said target binds to the swab,

- ii) injecting a liquid growth medium into the swab of the kit of claim 91,
- iii) allowing in situ growth of the bound micro-organism or mammalian cell in the swab of the kit of claim 91,
- iv) transferring the swab of the kit of claim 91 to a container with a liquid growth medium, and
- v) allowing for cultivation of the micro-organisms or mammalian cells in said liquid growth medium.

144. (New) A method for collecting a target from a collection medium comprising

- i) providing a device comprising a swab comprising gelatine or collagen; and
- ii) making contact between the swab of i) and the target, and
- iii) transferring the target from the swab to a first transfer medium by releasing said target from said swab into the first transfer medium.

145. (New) The method according to claim 144, wherein the collection is from a collection medium selected from the group consisting of a solid or semi-solid surface, a liquid, a gas and combinations thereof.

146. (New) The method according to claim 144, wherein the target is selected from the group consisting of a virus, a microorganism, a mammalian cell and an organic molecule.

147. (New) The method according to claim 146, wherein the organic molecule is selected from the group consisting of a nucleotide, a nucleic acid, a protein and a detergent.

148. (New) The method according to claim 144, wherein the transfer comprises the digestion of the gelatine or collagen.

149. (New) The method according to claim 144, wherein the transfer comprises the washing of target from the gelatine or collagen.

150. (New) The method according to claim 148, wherein the digestion comprises the use of an agent selected from the group consisting of an enzyme, a mineral acid, a carboxylic acid, a base and combinations thereof.

151. (New) The method according to claim 148, further comprising the extraction of the target by membrane filtration.

152. (New) The method according to claim 144, further comprising the use of an agent selected from the group consisting of a neutral diluent, an anti-microbial agent, a disinfecting agent and a dispersion agent.

153. (New) The method according to claim 144, wherein said method further comprises the step of culturing the cells collected on the swab in a growth medium.

154. (New) The method of claim 146, wherein the micro-organism is selected from the group consisting of bacteria, bacterial spores, archea, yeast and fungi.

155. (New) The method of claim 146, wherein the mammalian cell is a cell from blood plasma.

156. (New) The method of claim 146, wherein the mammalian cell is selected from the group consisting of leukocytes, erythrocytes and thrombocytes.

157. (New) The method according to any of claims 141 to 144, wherein said swab comprising gelatine or collagen is attached to a support.

158. (New) The method according to any of claims 141 to 144, wherein said support is made from materials selected from the group consisting of wood, natural or synthetic polymeric material including plastics and rubber materials, and any other organic or inorganic material.

159. (New) The method according to any of claims 141 to 144, wherein said support is of the form selected from the group consisting of a handle, a stick, a tweezer, a tong, a disc, a cube, a sphere, a block, a crucible and a coating.

160. (New) The method according to any one of claims 93, 94, 97, 130, 142, 143 and 144 wherein said swab comprising gelatine or collagen is pre-wetted.

161. (New) The method according to claim 97, wherein the transfer comprises the digestion of the gelatine or collagen.

162. (New) The method according to claim 97, wherein the transfer comprises the washing of target from the gelatine or collagen.

163. (New) The method according to claim 97, further comprising the use of an agent selected from the group consisting of a neutral diluent, an antimicrobial agent, a disinfecting agent and a dispersion agent.

164. (New) The method according to claim 97, wherein said method further comprises the step of culturing the cells collected on the swab in a growth medium.